

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 446
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
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AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 2436

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, MPOL, SNAR, HO
SUBJ: SDC AND CABINET HOLD JOINT SESSION: DENY DECISIONS TAKEN

REF: (A) TEGUCIGALPA 2354 (NOTAL), (B) TEGUCIGALPA 2036 (DTG
272159Z APR 78)

1. THE SUPERIOR DEFENSE COUNCIL (SDC) AND CABINET MET WITH CHIEF OF STATE GENERAL MELGAR AND ARMED FORCES COMMANDER GENERAL PAZ IN AN ALL-DAY SESSION MAY 19. CONTRARY TO WIDESPREAD EXPECTATION, NO CHANGES IN THE ELECTORAL LAW WERE ANNOUNCED NOR WAS ANY INFORMATION GIVEN OUT ON THE RESULTS OBTAINED TO DATE BY THE MILITARY COMMISSION INVESTIGATING NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING. IN A SHORT INTERVIEW WITH REPORTERS, GOH SPOKESMAN COL. ERIN O'CONNOR DENIED THAT THE JOINT MEETING DISCUSSED EITHER SUBJECT.

2. COL. O'CONNOR EXPLAINED THAT THE NARCOTICS INVESTIGATING COMMISSION HAD NOT YET PRESENTED ITS REPORT TO GENERAL PAZ. HE PROMISED THAT WHEN COMPLETED, IT WOULD BE MADE PUBLIC, AS HAS BEEN DONE IN PREVIOUS SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS. COL. O'CONNOR ALSO
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SAID THAT ANY AMENDMENTS TO THE ELECTORAL LAW WOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE CABINET AND POINTED OUT THAT A MEETING OF OVER FORTY PERSONS IS AN UNWIELDY FORUM FOR DISCUSSION OF TECHNICAL CHANGES. HE DID ADMIT THAT PROCEDURES FOR ACCELERATING THE ELECTORAL PROCESS WERE UNDER STUDY (IMPLYING AMENDMENT TO THE ELECTORAL LAW), BUT DENIED THAT THE MEETING HAD TAKEN ANY DECISIONS, AND REITERATED THE GOVERNMENT'S PROMISE OF FREE, HONEST ELECTIONS.

3. ASKED THE SUBJECT THEN OF THE LENGTHY MEETING, COL. O'CONNOR MAINTAINED THAT IT HAD PRIMARILY DISCUSSED METHODS FOR COORDINATING DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS THROUGH INCLUSION OF MILITARY REGIONAL COMMANDERS IN THE DECISION MAKING AND IMPLEMENTATION PROCESSES OF THE VARIOUS MINISTRIES.

4. COMMENT: IT IS DIFFICULT TO CREDIT THAT ELECTORAL LAW REFORM AND THE NARCOTICS INVESTIGATION WERE NOT DISCUSSED, AT LEAST INFORMALLY. WHETHER DONE OR NOT, THE ABSENCE OF ANY PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS PROVIDING CONCRETE INFORMATION MEANS THAT SPECULATION ON THESE TWO ISSUES WILL CONTINUE. POLITICAL PARTY REACTION, IN COMMENTS TO EMBOFFS, GENERALLY APPEARS TO ACCEPT THE INEVITABILITY OF SOME AMENDMENT TO THE ELECTORAL LAW, ESPECIALLY IF THESE WILL ASSURE ELECTIONS SOONER, AND WHICH, OF COURSE, HAS BEEN THE PARTIES' PRIMARY LONG-TERM GOAL.
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